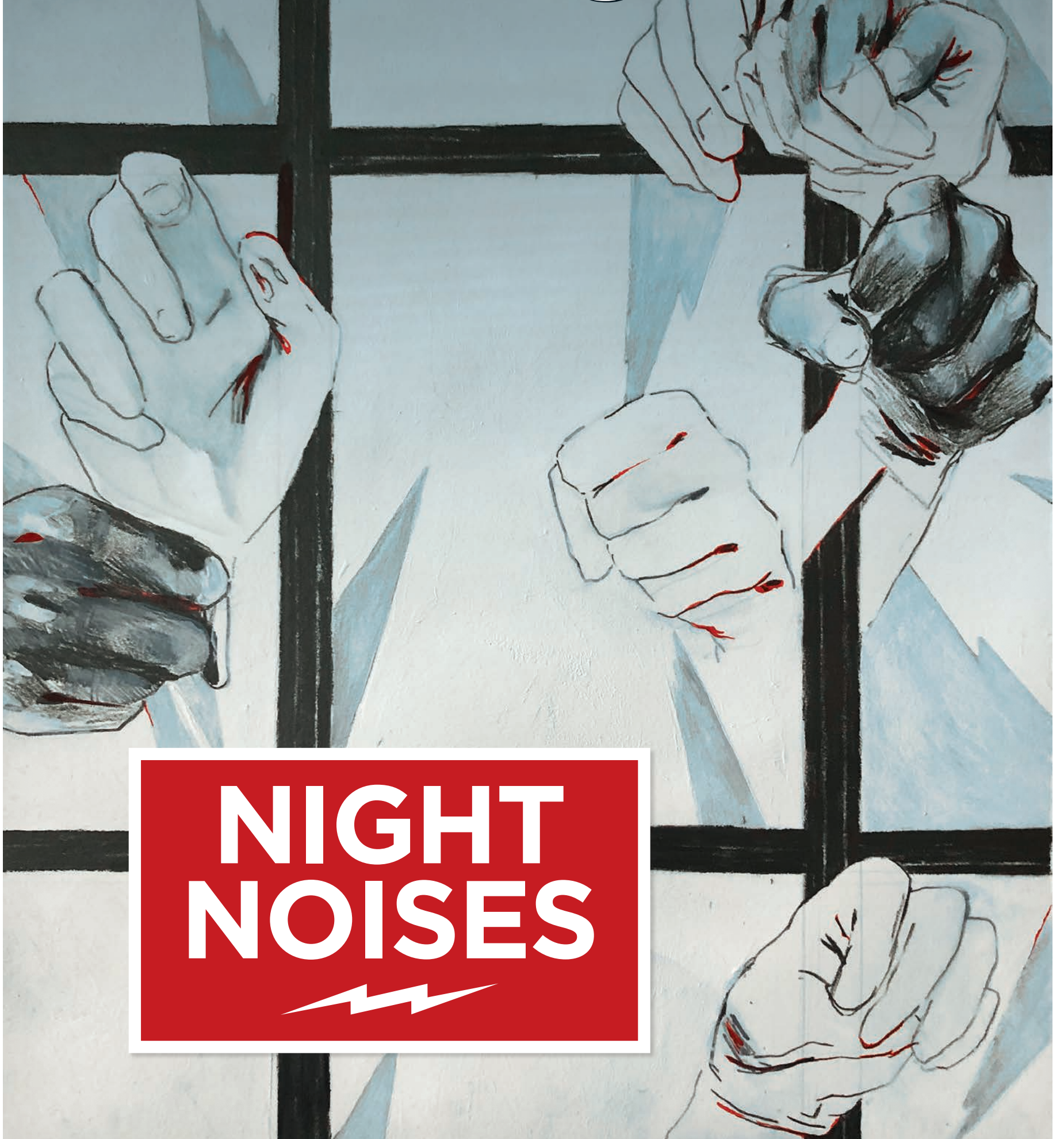


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## TABLE of CONTENTS

### 4 COVID-19 STORIES **Music in the Time of the Coronavirus: Bellevue Porchella with Brooke Ullman**

Brooke Ullman was the progenitor of Bellevue Porchella. She tells me how the event was conceived, what inspired it. And it's destined to become an annual event for the Northside neighborhood she calls home.

### 10 COVER STORY **Night Noises**

"Everything can change just like that." But there is no snap of fingers. This is the preamble to a story Jane's told a hundred times in person or on social media. The beginning of the story is always jarring, but it's the end that leaves people speechless.

### 16 AROUND TOWN **Events**

GardenFest of Lights at Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden Returns, The Richmond Boys Choir Performs Their 24th Annual Concert at Richmond Public Library

### 17 BOOK REVIEW **Bittersweet Hilarity**

The juxtaposition of "hilarious" and "depression" in "The Hilarious World of Depression" was so jarring to me I just had to read and find out more. And while author John Moe did have me laughing as he describes his lifelong battle with this illness, the bigger takeaway is how important it is for those struggling with depression to feel they can open up about their mental state and not be stigmatized for it.

### 19 AROUND TOWN **Art**

Recent Paintings by R. Sawan White at Eric Schindler Gallery, Anne's Visual Art Studio Is Now Open



COVER IMAGE:

Illustration by Catherine McGuigan

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# Music in the Time of the Coronavirus

## Bellevue Porchella with Brooke Ullman

by CHARLES MCGUIGAN

**T**HERE WAS A DAY unlike any other day of this peculiar year in a neighborhood unlike any other neighborhood anywhere, a day when things began making sense again, when for a brief five hours there was a welcome return to life as it once was before the twin viruses infected the heart and the soul of our country.

And on that mid-October day, it was as if Nature herself bestowed on us a silken blue sky, and temperatures that hovered at a constant between warm and cool, and leaves that had just begun to show their fall colors.

The cicadas had quieted, and from virtually every street corner in Bellevue you could hear music playing throughout the afternoon and into the twilight—live music of every genre. Hundreds walked the streets, some for the first time in seven months. They would gather in small clusters—socially distanced and face mask-clad—standing on the sidewalks and along the gutters, spilling into the streets, with eyes smiling and ears cocked toward porches where musicians played and sang. It was called Bellevue Porchella, an event that may be played out quarterly, or, at the very least, once a year.

“I had some adults that said that this was like trick or treating for them,” Brooke Ullman tells me. “I had other adults who said that they needed something like this, that they hadn’t been out since March and that it was just wonderful to see folks that they hadn’t seen since the spring.”

We’re sitting near a fire pit on the patio in the backyard of the arts-and-crafts style cottage Brooke shares with her husband, two children, and their pets. Their son rockets by on a flying saucer swing that’s tethered to the thick and lofty bough of a giant willow oak. He carves figure eights on the air above us.

Brooke Ullman was the progenitor of Bellevue Porchella. She tells me how the event was conceived, what inspired it. Turns out it was something my son Charles and I would

stop and listen to on many balmy summer nights as we made our way down MacArthur Avenue from the block-long commercial strip back to our home on Greycourt Avenue. No matter how often we heard it on those lightning bug rich nights, it always caught us by surprise, and we felt inexpressible gratitude for where we were fortunate enough to live. So we would ascend the curb, move up to the sidewalk and nestle against the picket fence and peer through a lattice of boxwood at men and women sitting on folding chairs with their instruments poised. And the music would begin.

“When this all started happening this year, people going into quarantine, there was an evening around April or May and The Bellevue Bon Temps were out there on their fiddles playing on their side porch,” Brooke remembers. “I actually recorded it and did a little video of it and posted it and I tagged the Bellevue Civic Association on Facebook and said, ‘This is so great.’ I love this about my neighborhood that we have these pockets of talent.”

So the seed was planted, and a few months later, on a stifling midsummer afternoon, the seed cracked open and a pale green shoot shot forth.

In July, Brooke watched from her front yard as a family with three kids strolled along the sidewalk across the street. They briefly stopped in front of the home of Haze and Dacey, two local musicians who were playing on their front stoop.

As Haze played on his upright bass, Dacey improvised a song for the kids. When the family moved on, Brooke crossed the street and told her neighbors how much she enjoyed listening to them play. And then she said this: “Wouldn’t it be cool if we had an outdoor walk-around little music thing?”

They both nodded. “Yeah, it’d be great,” said Dacey. “Will you do it? Will you organize it?”

“That is where the germ originated,” Brooke tells me now.

But it was out of the question for Brooke to put this together, juggling



Top: Brooke Ullman, the progenitor of Bellevue Porchella.

Bottom: Indira & Guppy Jo drew a large crowd on Greycourt Avenue.

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yet another project. As hectic as her life had been before the pandemic, it was now a high-speed roller coaster ride. She's a full-time manager, who's been working remotely during the pandemic. She has two school age children who have been at home since March. And to top it off she's in graduate school. "I said, 'There's no way, I don't have time to plan this.'"

Brooke wasn't going to let it die on the vine, though. So she reached out, and the response frankly blew her away.

"I ended up mentioning it to Summer Gentry and she said, 'You absolutely have to do this. This is a great idea. We absolutely have to do this. Get on the call and you have to mention it,'" Brooke says. "And so I joined the Bellevue Civic phone call in mid-August. And I threw it out there and tons of people were texting and writing, 'This is a great idea, I want to be involved. This is wonderful.'"

Bellevue had already lost a few of its signature annual festivals because of the virus. National Night Out had been cancelled, as had Christmas on MacArthur. And then there was the Spring Garden Walk.

"The Garden Walk had already been bumped the second time and they were gonna cancel it," says Brooke. "That's when Don Glazer stepped up. Don was super. He was very involved, very helpful, wanted to know what it was I needed, what my thoughts were. I said, 'I would love it to be a civic association event. And we could do it annually. I think it's got legs.'"

At about that time, Brooke connected with three people who would become instrumental in making Porchella a reality. There was of course Summer Gentry, who was joined by Rob McAdams and Jami Bricker.

"When I reached out to Summer, Rob was on the call, and Jami ended up getting pulled into the mix," Brooke says. "Jami used to play in a band, and was very involved in the Milwaukee summer festivals. You've got Rob who's involved in his son's music and the music scene himself. And Summer plays music. So it worked out wonderfully; it was a great mix of people."

Bellevue, which was one of Richmond's first streetcar suburbs back in the 1920s and 30s, covers some 35 square blocks and encompasses 1200 single households, along with about a dozen duplexes and two apartment buildings. Bellevue Porchella handled the logistics of the event in a manner that would have pleased Disneyworld or the US Army. And it



Top: Haze and Dacey attract a crowd on Greycourt Avenue.

Middle: Sean Balick playing a set on Nottoway Avenue.

Bottom: The Ebb performing on Newport Avenue.

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## COVID-19 STORIES



*Cold Harbor playing blue grass on Fauquier Avenue.*

was one woman who was chiefly responsible for it.

“Summer Gentry,” Brooke explains, “is good at coordinating things. She took a look at all the performers that had submitted to be part of this. Summer’s old school so she put it all out in color Post it notes and figured it all out. We talked many times about set lists and how long would somebody be able to play, how many times would someone want to play. We had a lot of discussions about whether we should centralize this and have it in one area, or should we let it be spread out. Thinking the annual Garden Walk tends to be spread out and if we really want people to be spread out during COVID-19, let them be spread out.”

The original date was washed out by rain. The following Saturday though, October 17, the rain date, was spectacular. Brooke remembers the day well, and how the music swept her away.

“I walked by that one in the 1200 block of Greycourt because the band needed to get set up at our house,” she says. “And they were over there playing Eric Clapton’s Cocaine at full volume and they were awesome. They were dead on.”

That was exactly what my son Charles and I heard as we stepped off our front porch on Greycourt Avenue that Saturday afternoon. We consulted an orange flier that the promoters of Bellevue Porchella had delivered a few weeks earlier to every household in the neighborhood. The flier had a map, and a QR code

you could scan to find out the exact times of performances along with short bios of the music makers. We studied it for a bit, and then decided to let our ears guide us. We walked over to MacArthur Avenue and up toward Claremont Avenue, and there was a young mother with her daughter clasped to her chest, and they waltzed in the street while a hundred people, socially distanced and wearing face masks, stood in small clusters on the sidewalks listening to The Bellevue Bon Temps.

Just to the north and west on Not-toway we heard the strains of a lone piano, somewhat muted. I’m guessing it was a baby grand, much too large to move out into the front yard, so the pianist, David Calkins, played from inside his home with all the windows open so the crowd could hear him perform.

Then, directly next door, as soon as David’s set ended, singer/songwriter Sean Balick, played an original work on acoustic guitar, a piece called “Dandelion.”

Back on Greycourt Avenue, Haze and Dacey were performing Joni Mitchell’s “Big Yellow Taxi.”

And just across the street, on the front porch of Brooke and Rob Ullman’s home, Indira & Guppy Joe drew a large crowd.

“I never anticipated the crowds that showed up,” Brooke tells me. “Indira & Guppy Joe played out in front of our house at five and six. After two or three songs one of the ladies in the audience came up and said, ‘Can



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you tell them to turn it up?’ And I said, ‘Yeah, after she’s done with the song, I’ll go tell her.’ And I walked up and I said, ‘Indira, they need it louder.’ And she looked up and she realized there were people all up and down the street because they were smart about social distancing. She had no idea the crowd was so large. It was wonderful.”


In the long calendar of the year, Richmond, Virginia has three days that stand out. Those three days in October annually attract hundreds of thousands to the waterfront along the James River. It started sixteen years ago as the American Folk Life Festival, and three years later morphed into the Richmond Folk Festival. Although they held a virtual event this year broadcast on public radio and television, the festival was cancelled due to COVID-19. Here’s what my son told me after the Bellevue Porchella.

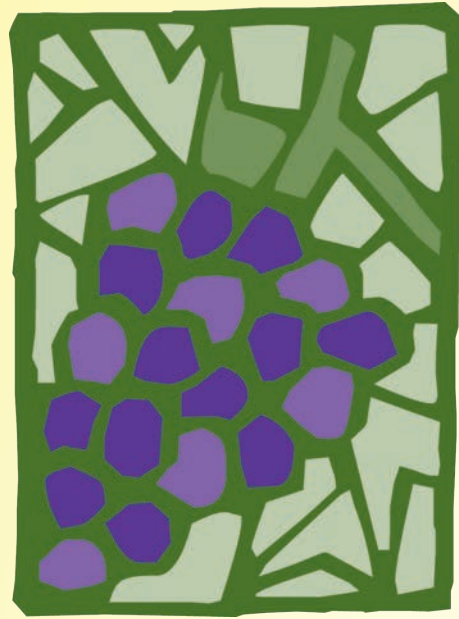
“It reminded me a lot of the Folk Festival,” Charles said. “It was a mini-folk festival in Bellevue in our own neighborhood. It was music to my ears. We had blue grass, acoustic, and even some classical piano music. We even heard some grunge and rock, so it was really nice to hear such a variety of music in our own neighborhood.”

Like most of us who attended the event, Charles hopes there will be more porchellas in the future.

Though it may not happen every quarter, Bellevue Porchella will definitely repeat every October. Brooke and her group are already planning what they’ll do—and not do—in the future.

Toward the end of that first Bellevue Porchella, Charles and I followed the stringy whine of blue grass over to Fauquier. Scores of people were gathered on the median strip and along the sidewalks on both sides of the street and in the neighbors’ front yards to listen to a band called Cold Harbor. It made my son think of a different time and a different place, as did the weather and the clarity and crispness of the air.

“It kind of reminded me of being in the mountains with the blue grass music and the leaves changing and the cool weather and the clear blue sky and the sun shining on everything,” he said. “It gets a good feel to it.” 



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# NIGHT NOISES



**“EVERYTHING CAN CHANGE JUST LIKE THAT.”**

But there is no snap of fingers. This is the preamble to a story Jane’s retold a hundred times in person or on social media. The beginning of the story is always jarring, but it’s the end that leaves people speechless.

Jane has it all. She knows it, too. Not one member of her family has been struck down by COVID. She and her husband Marty still have work, and are able to help their ten-year old son navigate school during the pandemic. Their other four boys are grown and making their way in the world. Marty and Jane and their offspring have health; they have good fortune; they have love. The house she shares with her husband and youngest son is perfect for them. They had the house painted a couple weeks earlier, and Marty screened in the side porch, and changed the deadbolt on the door off the porch so that it could be opened from the inside without a key. Marty’s a contractor and knows those locks can save lives if there’s a fire for instance; you don’t have to hunt for your key, just twist the thumb turn.

**E**

## EARLY ONE MORNING

when her story begins, Jane starts out of a deep sleep, eyes wide. She sits bolt upright in bed and stares at the door, which is open just a crack, casting a triangle of light on the floor. A noise woke her—a metallic and hollow clatter, the sound of trash being tossed into an empty dumpster. But the noise is an echo of a memory now. All she hears is Marty snoring and a steady rain pelting the roof. When the fog of sleep clears, Jane considers the pile of aluminum ladders stacked alongside the house. The painters hadn’t removed the ladders yet; they might have fallen. That would explain the noise. She wonders if someone tried to steal the ladders, so she rises from bed and moves toward the window. She can see nothing along the side of the house except the wet dark night, but above the sound of the rain and her husband’s snoring, she clearly hears voices.

Jane looks at her cellphone: it reads 4:45. She

is not alarmed. It could be early risers; she’s left the house at this hour before. She decides to let their dog out in the backyard to do his business. Flash is a massive mastiff, and he follows Jane down the stairs. As she approaches the side door she can hear the voices. They are loud now, and someone is out there kicking the door and pounding at it with balled fists. Then Flash, all one hundred and fifty pounds of him, makes a beeline for the door. Jane can sense the rage boiling in his gut and the rumble of his will as he growls and lunges toward the door and the man standing on the other side of fifteen panes of 1/8-inch thick glass.

“Somebody’s coming in,” Jane yells, and now Marty is up and out of bed. He vaults down the stairs and stands behind the couch facing the side door. He hears the panes of glass rattling. “Get out of here,” he yells. Marty flies back upstairs and grabs a crossbow that has no arrow, along with an antique sword.

by **CHARLES MCGUIGAN**

illustration by **CATHERINE MCGUIGAN**



A pair of bare fists come crashing through the small glass panes, pulverizing them into shards and slivers that shower the room and cover the floor with a thin coat of jagged sleet. It seems to Jane the glass is shattering in every direction, and that there are several voices outside, so she races back upstairs to her son's room. As she reaches his bedroom door her mind wanders into one of the darkest corners of Richmond's recent past. Jane thinks of the Harveys, a family of four—husband, wife, two young girls—brutally murdered in their home on a New Year's Day fifteen years ago during a grisly home invasion.

"There are multiple people coming in my house right now to kill my family," Jane thinks, then shuts the door behind her. She calls 911 and frantically searches for a skeleton key that will lock the door in this old house, but she cannot find it. She comforts her son, all the while calling 911, but the call doesn't go through. Jane thinks she hears people coming up the stairs. She leans against the door pushing all her weight into it, hoping this will deter anyone from breaking into her son's room. She will later learn the noise in the hall and on the stairwell were made by Marty who has the build and look of a Russian kick-boxer.

Marty has no idea if the man on the other side

of the door is holding a gun, so he keeps his distance. Gradually, he approaches the intruder and points the crossbow at his face. And then the man starts punching out the panes of glass again. There is no gun. The intruder's hands search for the thumb turn of the deadbolt. That's when Marty pulls the sword from its sheath, and begins hacking away at the hands that have entered his home. Each time Marty slashes one hand, it retreats, but then the other one enters. When Marty slices into that one, it pulls back, only to be replaced by the other hand. It's like a game of whack-a-mole.

Now there is blood splattered everywhere. There are drops of it on the shattered glass, and it pools near the threshold where the intruder stands. In this predawn light it does not look red; it is dark blue, almost black.

And the intruder keeps screaming. "I'm comin' in. I am coming in!"

"I got a gun, get the f\*\*k out of here," Marty yells. He's looking right into the intruder's face and can see his entire body. Marty sizes him up. He can't be much more than twenty years old, and has a stocky build. At about six feet tall, he's a couple inches shorter than Marty. The intruder wears no shirt despite the cold rain coming down, and bears a number of tattoos on his arms and chest.

Marty knows that he will use the sword in earnest if the intruder breaks through the door. And the sword blade is razor-sharp. Marty nicked himself with it years ago and still sports a scar from the wound.

The intruder just keeps coming back with his fists, and Marty fends them off with the sword. Throughout it all, the intruder is talking to two men who aren't even there. Marty is convinced this young man is drugged to the gills—PCP he's thinking—so he decides not to cause him bodily harm.

Upstairs Jane has finally gotten through to the police dispatcher. She barks her address into her cell phone, and begins a screaming dialogue with her husband.

"Get the gun," Marty hollers.

"I've got the gun," Jane roars back. "I'm coming down. The police are on the way. I've got a gun."

Of course there is no gun, but the police are on their way. Had there been a gun, Jane knows the young man battering his way into their home would now be dead.

Jane looks at her son, huddled in his bed. She fights back tears, and yells into the phone. "Hurry, hurry, hurry. My husband's downstairs fighting these people in the house." The entire time there is glass breaking. It never stops. And Marty continues to yell at the intruder. Jane tells her son, "It's going to be okay."

Then the police dispatcher tells her the police have arrived. Jane checks her phone. She had been talking to the dispatcher for just five minutes, but it seemed like an eternity.

"Everything's going to be okay," Jane says to her son.

"Where are you?" the dispatcher says. "Don't come out. Where's your husband?"

Downstairs on the screened-in porch, the intruder backs away from the side door as soon as he sees the flash of blue lights. He faces the street and bends over the retro metal patio glider that backs up to one of the screened-in panels of the side porch. His hands grip the backrest and his eyes widen, almost in fascination, as he watches

the intriguing pulse of blue light.

Marty runs through the house and as he opens the front door, the police, with weapons drawn, train their guns on him.

Instinctively, Marty raises his hands. "It's not me," he says. "He's on my side porch."

"Where? Where? Where?" the cops say in unison.

Marty walks slowly to the side of the house. "Right there," he says, pointing at the intruder who is still transfixed by the flickering blue lights.

Jane remains on the phone with the dispatcher, who tells her it's safe to come downstairs. "Hell no," says Jane. "I'm not coming down until I know that there's nobody in my house."

It takes the police a good hour and half to process the intruder. An ambulance arrives at one point and paramedics wrap the intruder's hands in bandages. The police move the intruder from the squad car to the ambulance and back again. They are having trouble learning the young man's true identity. Jane just wants them gone. She doesn't want to have to look at the young man, doesn't want him or the cops in front of her house any longer. Time for them to go. When Jane is certain the house is clear, she goes to the bathroom and retches into the commode. Her life, she knows, will never be the same.

Later in the day, Jane and Marty sweep up the glass, and wipe down the floors and molding and walls with bleach and water, wiping away the blood, which had begun to congeal. They also sponge away the pair of bloody hand prints the intruder left on the backrest of the glider on the side porch. The water in the bucket is tomato red. And then Marty and Jane buy a gun and ammunition.



Every night after that, Jane lies awake in her bed, while Marty sleeps. Every creak, every footfall startles her and she calls out to her husband, "Did you hear that? Wake up. Go downstairs and check." And Marty rolls out of bed, checks things out downstairs, and returns.

Jane simply doesn't sleep at night. In the past when she woke late at night, she would sometimes go downstairs, get a glass of water, or let the dog out. Now she is terrified of leaving the second floor. Now when she can't sleep, she paces around the bedroom, moving from window to window to see what is going on outside. At night, the downstairs terrifies her.

Sometimes at night she will look at the face of her son, at the smoothness of his features. She sees that his body is still and his breathing even. And then she thinks what he must have endured that night, and it calls to mind her own fears of a child. She remembers the nightmare, waking up and realizing someone had broken into their home. But for Jane, as a child, it was just a fear. For her son now, it is a reality.

Every day, Jane and Marty talk about that night of terror. It's their way of getting through it. They also talk with their son. And here's what Jane says: "This guy that broke into our house, we're pretty sure was completely out of it on drugs. That's somebody's child, that's somebody's kid. He's also somebody's grandchild, somebody's brother, somebody's uncle. Maybe, somebody's dad."

Between themselves, Marty and Jane remember what they had done as young people. "When I was his age and in high school I didn't do a ton of drugs, but I've experimented," Jane says. "They told us it was acid he was on, it was not some hard drug, it was hallucinogenic, which normally most of us would watch the trees breathe, or watch a coffee cup breathe." She considers the cup in her hands.

"Maybe he really would have just come in and sat on the couch," Marty suggests. "Maybe he just needed to be inside in his drug stupor."

Jane realizes they are trying to humanize this man who terrorized them. It's not that they were softening, but they were trying to understand.

"I still want them to throw the book at him next week in court," Jane tells her husband. Yet as a mother she also understands the young man could have been one of her own boys. "One of our five boys could get in trouble someday," she says. "Might have gotten into trouble. Who knows? None of us are angels. Everyone has their thing and if they haven't done something, they know somebody or are related to somebody that's done something stupid. Or they're lying. Or didn't get caught."



Eight days after the intruder smashed their windows and their sense of safety, Jane and Marty, at nine on a Monday morning, find themselves in a courtroom. They survey the others there, but don't recognize the intruder.

Then a young man with a very distinctive hair style walks in. Just beside him is a woman who looks to be about Jane's age. Their eyes don't meet. Jane nudges her husband. "That's him," she says. "That must be his mother. I hope they throw the book at him." Marty nods.

Jane continues to watch as the woman touches her son's shoulder, and something wells up in her, some new understanding. She looks over to her husband, and can see that he is watching the woman, too. "I feel really bad now," Marty says. "Oh my God, I feel really bad."

The prosecuting attorney approaches Jane and her husband, and says, "This is what we're going to do to make sure he gets prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. We will make it very clear that we

will not accept anything except for jail time for him."

Jane and Marty look at one another, and Jane raises her hand.

"Before we go that far tell me one thing," she says. "What does he say about it? Has he shown any remorse? What does he say happened?"

"Okay, hold on," says the prosecutor. "He actually has written y'all a letter. He would like to speak with you in person, would like to apologize to you in person, if it's possible. He wants to pay you restitution. Would you be willing to let him speak with you?"

"Yes," Jane says. "Let's go."

The three walk out of the courtroom and into a large foyer. The young man and his mother look both terrified and mortified.

The mother snuffles between deep sobs, and the young man's cheeks are streaked with tears and his eyes are moist.

Without saying a word, Marty saunters over to the young man and shakes his hand.

"I'm so sorry," this young man says. "I'm so sorry for what I did to your family."

And then Jane does something she hasn't done with her own grown children since the COVID crisis started. She hugs the mother, wraps her arms around her. Jane rubs the woman's back and can feel her trembling. Jane tries to soothe, rubbing her back even harder.

"It's okay," Jane whispers in her ear. "It's gonna be okay."

"I am so sorry," this other mother says.

The prosecutor later tells Marty and Jane that the young man received a ninety-day suspended jail sentence. As the couple wait for the elevator, the mother and her son approach them. The young man hands them an envelope containing seven hundred dollars, and he can see a question on Jane's face.

"I want you to have this money to pay for any damages," he says.

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“I don’t feel comfortable taking your money,” Jane says. “Your mom just came all the way here from Minnesota during COVID. I’m sure times are hard for everybody right now. Please take this money back. I don’t feel comfortable.” But the young man’s attorney insists, and Jane folds the envelope in half and she and her husband board the elevator destined for the ground floor.

Not long after this, Jane receives an email from the mother. She’s telling her husband about that email. “She wanted to check in and see how we’re doing and see how our son is doing,” Jane says. “She wanted to let us know how sorry she was for everything and how sorry she was for how her son’s actions had affected our lives. She said let’s stay in touch and that she understands if I don’t write her.”

But Jane does respond, and then receives another email from this woman out of the Midwest. “She said she wants us to come out there when COVID’s over so she can show us around Minnesota and have a barbecue,” says Jane to her husband. “And someday we could do that, right? I could see us being friends in real life. Honestly. It’s so fricking crazy.”

That night, when her son is down, and Marty is asleep, she climbs in bed next to her husband, and nestles against his back, and she sleeps soundly.

Early in the morning Jane stirs in her sleep. She’s not sure what she heard or even if it was a noise that woke her. She holds her right hand to her chest and can feel her own heart, and thinks she can hear it, too. **NS**



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## EVENTS



*Richmond Boys Choir with President Barack Obama.*

### GELLMAN ROOM CONCERT SERIES AT RICHMOND PUBLIC LIBRARY

The Richmond Boys Choir performs their 24th annual concert—a holiday tradition at the Richmond Public Library at 2 pm on December 5. The concert will be livestreamed from the Gellman Room.

Violinist Becca Longhenry, cellist David Raposo, and pianist Matthew Booth explore some of the treasures in piano trio literature, featuring works

by Frank Bridge, Joaquim Turina, and Felix Mendelssohn at 2 pm on December 19. This recital will also be livestreamed from the Gellman Room.

**Richmond Public Library**

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Richmond, VA 23219

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[rvalibrary.org/events/gellman-concerts](http://rvalibrary.org/events/gellman-concerts)




### GARDENFEST OF LIGHTS AT LEWIS GINTER BOTANICAL GARDEN

Lewis Ginter's popular seasonal light display opens November 23 and will run through January 10, 2021. The light show will be closed on Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Safety is the top priority as the Garden makes appropriate adjustments to GardenFest during this time of COVID-19. This year's GardenFest is designed so small groups of friends and family can relax, have fun, and make special memories in a magical outdoor setting.

"Our staff and volunteers know how important Dominion Energy GardenFest of Lights is to the community," says interim Executive Director Kim

Dove. "Although it's a challenging time, we're committed to offering the best display and experience possible given the challenges of COVID-19 and the Garden's focus on safety."

All tickets, which are available online, must be pre-purchased. Tickets are limited and have a 30-minute arrival time window. Masks are required for all guests over age 10. There are separate entry and exit points, and social distancing protocols must be followed. 

**Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden**

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# Bittersweet Hilarity

by **FRAN WITHROW**

**T**HE JUXTAPOSITION of “hilarious” and “depression” in “The Hilarious World of Depression” was so jarring to me I just had to read and find out more. And while author

John Moe did have me laughing as he describes his lifelong battle with this illness, the bigger takeaway is how important it is for those struggling with depression to feel they can open up about their mental state and not be stigmatized for it.

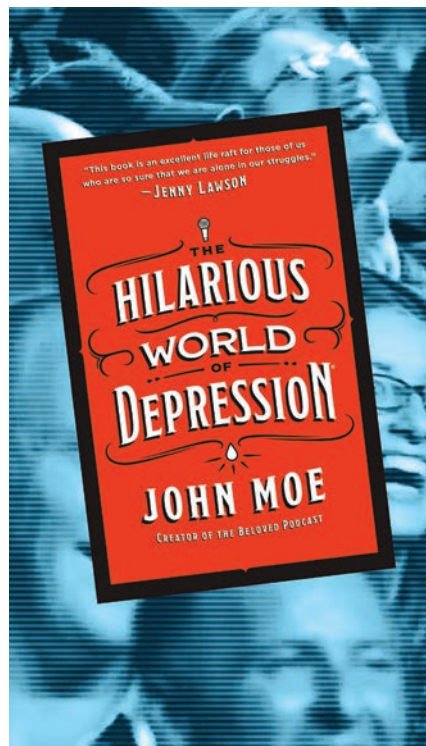
Moe grew up the youngest of four in a family who came to the United States from Norway. His oldest brother, Rick, struggled with drugs and their father was an alcoholic. Moe faced down depressive symptoms even as a child, especially in junior high school (a time period in many people’s lives when they can get “ka-whomped” by depression, he says). Big surprise there.

What Moe discovers is that comedy can ease the pain of depression. (“Carol Burnett as Coping Mechanism” is the title of one chapter.) He discovers that making people laugh eases his symptoms, an insight he learns is common among comedians, who often battle this illness.

In and out of therapy, on and off medications, Moe traces the path of managing depression, finding a supportive spouse, becoming a father, and beginning the podcast bearing this book’s name. The podcast showcases comedians who share their own stories about managing depression: Margaret Cho, Andy Richter, Peter Sagal.

Along the way Moe helps the reader understand what depression really is, why it is not something you can just “snap out of,” and how it affects a person’s thinking. He discusses the stigma attached to depression and suicide, and how this societally perceived shame prevents sufferers from seeking help.

Moe says a depressed person can misinterpret events, unintentionally adding to their suffering. Seeing someone with a disgusted look on their face, Moe says, will automatically cause the person who is depressed to think that person hates him, when in reality the person “ate some bad clams.”



Moe also acknowledges that as terrible as depression is for him, he fully understands that the privileges he experiences as a straight white male make it a little easier. For those who are anything else, he says, opening up can feel “like giving one more weapon to someone who you know can use it against you.”

Moe’s brother, Rick, who also fights depression, ultimately dies by suicide. This leads Moe to struggle not only with his illness but also with guilt over his brother’s death. Moe’s grief for his brother convinces him to abandon his own thoughts of suicide and renews his determination to manage his illness and to work toward de-stigmatizing depression so others do not feel so alone and isolated.

Battling depression is a lifelong process. Permitting those who face this debilitating illness to open up without fear of derision, dismissiveness, or condensation is one tiny step forward for sufferers. Moe’s story, which is groundbreaking and fearless, is an important undertaking, helping the reader understand more about depression, bittersweet hilarity and all. **NJ**

***The Hilarious World of Depression***  
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## ART



### RECENT PAINTINGS BY R. SAWAN WHITE

Eric Schindler Gallery will host an in-person open house on November 20 and 21 for its latest installation of recent works by Rhode Island based artist R. Sawan White. There will be a virtual tour the night before at 7 pm on the gallery's Facebook page: facebook.com/Eric-Schindler-Gallery-119667029464. For the in-person open house, face masks are required, and only five people will be allowed in the gallery at a time.

R. Sawan was a provost scholar at Virginia Commonwealth University and earned a first degree in printmaking at in the Midlands of England. She has taken her love of process and technique found in etching and applied it

to her current painting work.

"I like to think about things we can't or don't see," says the artist. "All my work is born out of that place. We were made to seek — beauty, justice, truth — things unseen — and to make them visible through our lives."

Show runs through December 19; other hours by appointment. Check with the gallery for updates and additional walk-in hours

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### VISUAL ART STUDIO IS NOW OPEN

Anne's Visual Art Studio will be open to the public from 1 till 3 pm every Thursday and Friday through December 18. You can also request a gallery viewing by appointment. Current gallery shows—Languages of Clay, Fiber and Poetry by Carolyn Gabb, and Absolutions by Alan Hollins—will be on display through December 18.

Face masks and social distancing are

required. No more than eight visitors at a time. Surfaces, door knobs and any items touched, are cleaned immediately after use. Hand sanitizer is also available. 

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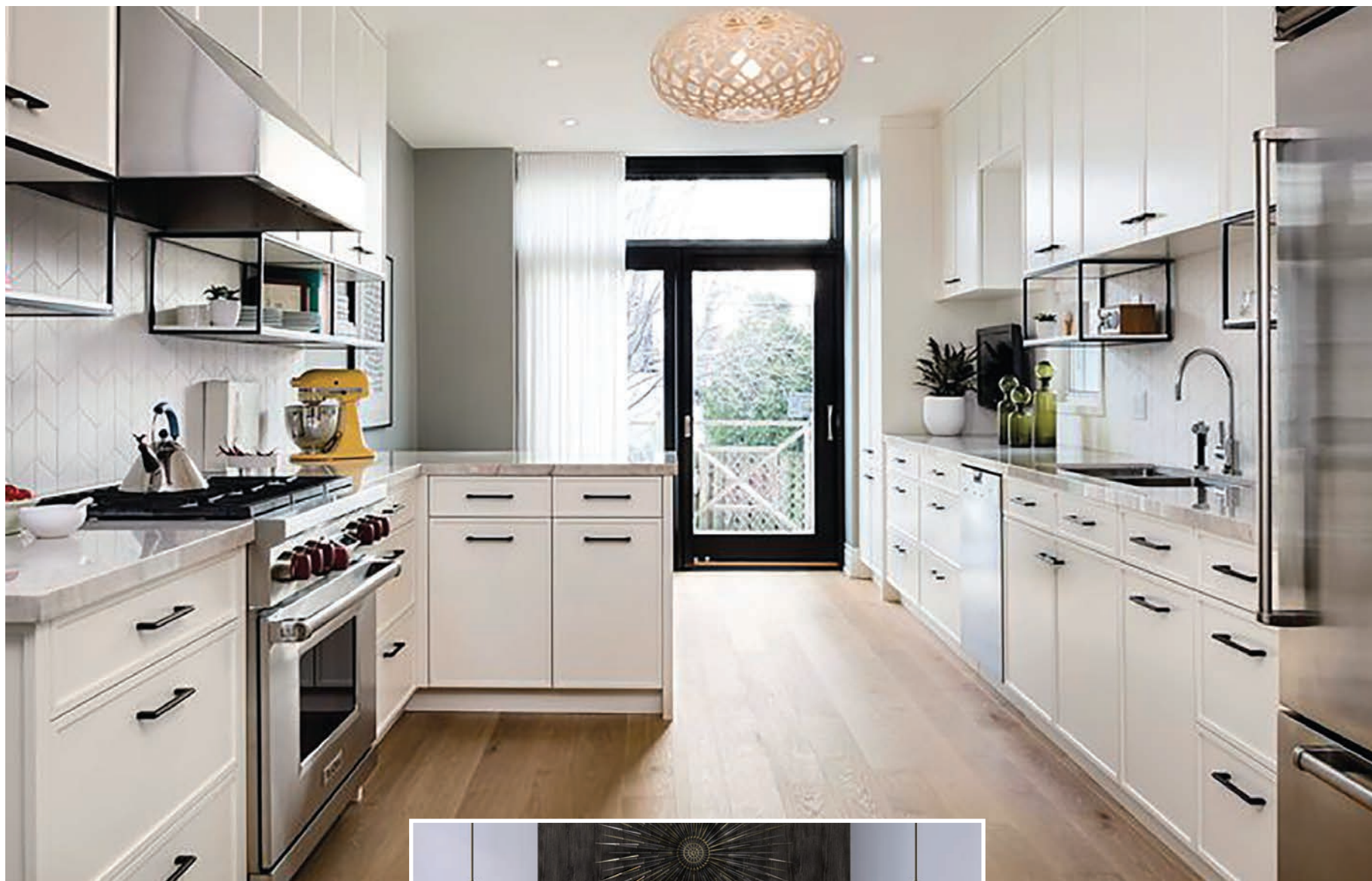


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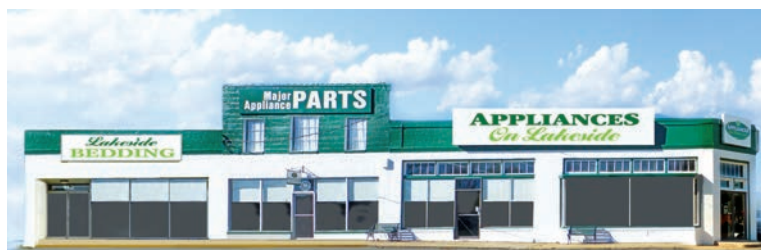


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